

REMARKS

Claims 29-103 are now pending. Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

At the outset, Applicants would like to thank Examiner Tran for indicating that Claims 24 and 25 are allowable. In the amendment submitted above, newly-added Claim 29 represents Claim 24 written in independent form. Likewise, newly-added Claim 42 represents Claim 25 written in independent form. Claims 30-41, 55 and 57 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 29. Claims 43-54, 56 and 58 depend directly or indirectly from Claim 42. Accordingly, Applicants submit that Claims 29-58 are allowable for the same reasons as Claims 24 and 25. For that reason, those claims will not be discussed further below.

Claims 59-103 are directed to methods of treating polymeric products using the countercurrent stripping pipe of the present invention. Specifically, Claims 59-73 are directed to a method of removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric products. Claims 74-88 are directed to removing residual volatiles from polymer dispersions. Claims 89-103 recite replacing an organic solvent of a polymer solution with water.

An important issue in removing volatile organic constituents from polymeric reaction products is the susceptibility to coagulation and incrustation of the treated substances and the accompanying danger that the trays will tend to stick to the wall of the column. Such tray sticking could easily nullify the benefits of using plate packets at all. To solve this problem, the present invention does not only teach to use plate/tray packets but also to have the column pipe made from a plurality of pipe sections which are connected to one another via flange connections. Thus, even when sticking of the plates occurs, the whole column can easily be demounted into individual sections which are easily accessible for cleaning or changing of the sieve plates without requiring a number of manholes distributed along the columns.

The rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Sontag (U.S. 1,749,266) is respectfully traversed. That reference fails to disclose the claimed methods.

Sontag describes a process and an apparatus for the baffling of gases, vapors, liquid and certain solid substances (see page 1, column 1, lines 1-5). The reference states that “the invention may be advantageously used in the oil industry where crude oil is to be fractionated and variously treated. It may also be used in the manufacture of high grade alcohols and the like, acids of various kinds, and for the recovery of gasoline from gases or vapors containing it, etc.” (see the paragraph bridging columns 1-2 at page 1). Nowhere does Sontag describe treating polymeric products. Therefore, the reference fails to describe the methods recited in Claims 59-103. Accordingly, those claims are not anticipated by Sontag. Withdrawal of this ground of rejection is respectfully requested.

The rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Sontag in view of Leva (U.S. 3,928,513) is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, Sontag fails to describe the treatment of polymeric products as recited in Claims 59-103. Those references fail to suggest the claimed methods.

Leva discloses a gas-liquid contact apparatus (see the Abstract). This reference fails to describe treating polymeric products.

Since both Sontag and Leva fail to disclose the treatment of polymeric products, those references taken in combination cannot suggest the methods of Claims 59-103. Moreover, those references certainly do not suggest the benefits obtained with the present invention as described above. Therefore, Claims 59-103 are not obvious over the combination of Sontag and Leva. Accordingly, withdrawal of this ground of rejection is respectfully requested.

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Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Early notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

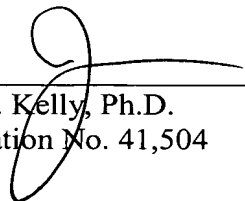
Respectfully submitted,

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